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Duty of Prayer,
IN THREE
SERMONS.

By *Jonathan Rose*, A. M.
VICAR of *Sedbergh* in *York-shire*.

Dedicated to, and Published for the
Good of his beloved Parishioners, of
Sedbergh, Dent, and Garsdale.

Y O R K :

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Duty of Prayer

IN THREE

SERMONS



By Jonathan Edwards

Revised and Published by
Good of his beloved
Sabbath Day and Conference

Y O R K :

Printed by GRACE WHITE, at the
Office of the American Baptist

The Duty of Prayer.

Rom. xii. 12. *Continuing instant in Prayer.*

P RAYER is a Duty both easy and honourable in its Performance, and beneficial in its Influence ; and yet to which we have both a natural and acquired Indisposition. 'Tis a lifting up our Hearts unto the Lord, with earnest Desires for Deliverance out of whatever Troubles we groan under, and a petitioning his Grace and Goodness for whatever we stand in need of. 'Tis a laying open our Wants before God, complaining of our Burthens, representing our Griefs and Disconsolations ; to beg Remedy and Ease, Support and Counsel, Health and Safety, Peace and Salvation of Soul and Body. 'Tis a *Jacob's* Ladder that joins Heaven and Earth, whereon the Soul ascends the Ætherial Regions, and presents its Supplications before the Throne of Mercy ; and Christ receives our Prayers, and unites them to his own, and so sanctifies them, and with his own Intercession presents them to his Father, and makes them acceptable and operative, powerful and Prevalent, by which Means the Blessings of Heaven are derived down and descend upon us. 'Tis a Command God has given us by his Son, and

urges to us by his Spirit, and the Sanction is back'd with an obliging Promise, *Ask and ye shall receive*, Mat. 7. 7. *John* 16. 24. Which of us would be poor and Mean? With what Speed and Crowding should we hasten to a Prince's Palace, were he so bountiful to us as to give us such a Call? And though we cannot but acknowledge God Almighty to be the sole Proprietor and Disposer of all Things appertaining to this Life or a better, yet how slow and unwilling are we to come before him? How heartless and indifferent when we put up our Prayers to him? Which can proceed from nothing else, but our not desiring, as we ought, what we ought most passionately to long for; or if we do desire what is so good, necessary, beneficial, useful for us, 'tis a choosing rather to miss of our Satisfaction and Felicity, than to put our selves to the easy Pains of begging for it. To urge us to which Duty, with all its due Circumstances, the Scripture is very full, and this small Portion of it I have now read unto you no less comprehensive, *Continuing Instant in Prayer*.

Where we have,

- I. The Duty enjoyn'd, in the word *Prayer*.
- II. The Circumstance of Time, in the word *Continuing*.
- III. The Qualifications of it, in the word *Instant*, for so instant signifies, Earnest.

In treating of the Duty it self, I shall not trouble you with any particular Discussion of its several Parts, which are Confession, Petition, Deprecation, Intercession and Thanksgiving, (for your Direction in which I would refer you to the incomparable Author of *The whole Duty of Man*) but take all together, as they make up one Body of Prayer:

And



And shall shew,

1. The Necessity
2. The Advantages } } of PRAYER.

First, The Necessity of Prayer.

1. And indeed if we consider that absolute Authority and Dominion God has over us, the vast Distance that is between us, as he is our Creator and we his Creatures, but that made infinitely greater as we are Sinners; the Greatness of his Power, and our own Frailty and Nothingness, the Strictness of his Justice, and how obnoxious we have rendered our selves to it, and liable to the Severity of his Wrath; his Essential Purity, that cannot endure Sin in the least Instance and Degree; and how often and Hainously we offend against it; how heavy and consuming his Displeasure is, and how daringly we have provoked it, that he has threatned Sin with the Execution of the greatest Miseries in this Life, and infinitely greater in the Life to come. And we cannot but be sensible of an unavoidable Necessity of obtaining his Pardon and being reconciled to him, or Perishing Eternally, in that just Destruction prepared for all wilful and obstinate Offenders.

2. Again, If we consider the Essential Laws of his Immaculate Justice, and the infinite Guilt of our own Demerits, which bind us to Punishment, we cannot but see an absolute Necessity of our own undergoing the Punishment due to our Sins, and suffering for ever, because we can never suffer enough; or else of some other suffering for us, to appease that Justice we had enraged; some Surety, some Sponsor, some Mediator, some Redeemer, to pay our Ransom and bring us a Release. And though God

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of his infinite Goodness and Mercy, and Christ of his tender Love and Compassion towards us, have done that for us without us, and to which we did not, nor could Contribute any thing; yet it is expected, we should sue to God the Father, through Jesus Christ, who is God the Son; or we should Pray to Christ, and he to the Father for us, to apply his Sufferings and Satisfaction to us, and accept it for us.

And PRAYER is the necessary and effectual Means of conveying this to us: When we do through Repentance and Faith; an hearty Sorrow for our Sins, and a firm Belief that God for Christ's sake will be merciful unto us, and forgive us our Sins, if we do with unfeigned Prayer beg it of both.

Could any hope for Pardon at an easier Rate? Can any Man expect his Enemy should forgive him without his asking him Forgiveness? Or that God, who though he Love us infinitely, yet infinitely Hates our Sins, should Frankly forgive us all, Seal and send down our Pardons and apply them unto us, unless we express our Willingness to receive, and Thankfulness for them, by earnestly desiring it of him?

3. Again, If we consider how naturally prone we are to Evil, how inevitably inclined to run into Mischief, and do what we should not; how Supine and Negligent, how dull and slothful, how rash and unadvised, how Timorous and weak, in not doing what we should, or not when, or not how, or not enough, or not well enough, we cannot but see a great want in us, and Necessity of God's restraining and preventing, his illuminating and assisting Graces. And God gives his Grace and Holy Spirit

to

to them that ask them. *Luke 11. 3. James 4. 6. God resisteth the proud, but giveth Grace to the humble, and more Grace. Those that think to weather it out by their own Strength without God's, shall be Laught at by him: But they that through a Sense of their own Wants and his Assistance beg it of him, shall receive more and more; and God gives liberally and upbraideth not, even Wisdom to them that ask him. James 1. 5. And every Good and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, v. 17.*

4. Again, Consider how many Spiritual Enemies we have about us; the Flesh, that is very near us, in our very Bosoms, nay that is our very selves, continually at hand, continually ready, continually Plying us, with forbidden Objects and sensual Pleasures, and Temporal Delights; that is always Tugging at our Souls; by inward Thoughts and secret Motions, wooing us to a Compliance with its Baits and Gratifications, to the undoing of the whole Man in Soul and Body. The whole World without us, by its Profits and its Pleasures, by its Honours and Promotions, by its Promises and Threats, its Smiles and Frowns, its gilded Vanities and popular Topicks and enticing Customs, enclining us to look no farther, but set up our Rest on this side *Jordan*, and be content with a Terrestrial Paradise. The Devil and his Angels, seeking all Opportunities, and working all the ways they can, to make us forget God, or offend, or defy him; stirring up the World and the Flesh against us; throwing Temptations in our way to draw us to Sin, or affright us from our Duty. Consider this, I say, And we cannot but see a great Necessity of begging God Almighty's Grace to assist and strengthen us in the inner Man; of giving us his
Spirit

Spirit or a Guard of Angels to enable us to resist and overcome the wicked one, and to limit his Assaults, that he do not over-power us, and bear us down into Sin and Hell.

5. Again, Consider how many Temporal Dangers we lye open to. An Enemy from without, or an Enemy within, may over run our Country, and bring it to Desolation; the Winds from above, or the Winds below, a Tempest, or an Earth-quake may shake down our Houses and bring the Roof upon our Heads; the Floods may spoil our Land, or unseasonable Weather our Seed-time, or our Harvest; an infected Air may sweep away Man and Beast, our Drink may be our Poison, and every Bit our last; or a Bolt from the Clouds, or a Fall from an Horse, or a Sigh, or a Laughter, may bring us to untimely Ends, to Die suddenly and in our Sins; A Thousand, Thousand, Things may happen to take away our Lives or embitter them unto us. Consider this I say, and then tell me, whether there be not a great Necessity of Praying unto God to protect and defend us, to save and guard us with a particular Providence, who governs all Things according to his own Will and Pleasure.

6. Again, Consider how many Blessings we enjoy, Spiritual and Temporal; that we enjoy the Light of the Sun, and the Benefit of the common Air; that we have Life and *Liberty, Health and Wealth, Food and Raiment, Friends and Comforts, Times of Labour, and Times of Rest*; nay that we are not already in Hell and lodged in a Bed of Flames: But that God hath sent his Son, to be born and die for us, to forgive us our Sins, to save us from Hell, and bring us to Heaven; that he has revealed that Mystery and his Will to us, and entred into a Covenant with us, begotten

us to a lively *Faith* and *Hope*, Engrafted us into the Christian Church, and into one of the best of Churches, that he continues to us the Light of his Gospel and the Means of Salvation, and continues his Spirit and Messengers to us, to bring us from Sin to Piety, from the Power of Satan unto God! Consider these and then tell me, whether there be not a great Necessity upon us, to Praise God for these inestimable *Blessings*, especially sith he expects none other *Tribute*, but our enjoying all to our own Comfort and his Glory.

7. Again, Consider how nearly we are related to one another, of the same *Flesh* and *Blood*, made up of the same Materials, liable to the same Dangers, encompassed with the same Infirmities, Partakers of the same common Blessings; how little we deserve, and how much we stand in need of; how little of That we pray for, how little of that we do pray for we pray for as we ought; and then tell me whether there be not a great Necessity of our Praying with, and for one another.

I hope by this Time both you and I are convinced of the urgent Necessity of this Duty of Prayer, and a more close Inspection and Narrower Reflection upon all these Cases I have mentioned, will press it upon our Minds with an Irresistable Force, and Prayer will take us, as it does Heaven even with Constraint and Violence. Especially, if every Man would add his own Observation, of his own particular Needs and Dangers, which are Infinite to all, and cannot be brought within the Sphere of a publick Discourse; nor be reckoned up in every Instance and Minute Circumstance in an Age, though we should employ our whole Breath in nothing else: Because all the Blessings we enjoy, are Multiplied upon us, every Minute we enjoy them.

2. The Advantages of Prayer.

1. And in the first place, What an honour is it for us, poor Worms, Dust and Ashes, nay worse than that, Perishing Creatures, Miserable Sinners, to have the Liberty of Addressing our selves to such an High, Holy, Heavenly Being, that sits above the Clouds and Starry Regions, ruling over all ; whom if we look upon with the Eye of Faith and improved Reason, would even make us tremble to come before him ; and yet he gives us leave, and Invites us to it, and receives us Graciously ; and has set his Son in our own Nature as a Screen between us and his Angry Countenance, through whom we may apply our selves unto him, and come with Boldness unto the Throne of Grace.

2. A God that is Omniscient, knows all we desire, and all we should, all we want, and all we can want ; knows whereof we were made at first, and what we have made our selves, and what is required to make us better. So that if we beg of him to do all which he knows is needful for us, we know we beg every Thing that is so : Because he certainly knows what is, and what is not, for us ; otherwise we might miss many Things that are Material, or like Forward Children cry to eat Painted Glass, and to swallow down a gilded Poison. He knows every Link of Providence, and the whole Chain of universal Nature, and we might pray for a Blessing that might prove a Curse, either directly or indirectly, in the Thing it self, or in its Consequence, in the Matter or Event, did not his infinite Wisdom see and fore-see, what is or shall be for our Good, what is or may be for our Harm.

3. As he is Omniscient so he is all Powerful, and can do what he will. *'Tis he that Measured the Waters in the Hollow*

The Advantages of PRAYER. 11

Hollow of his Hand, and meted out Heaven with A Span, and Comprehended the Dust of the Earth in A Measure, and weighed the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in a Ballance. Isa. 40. 12. He guides Nature in all her Courses, and turns the Infinite Wheels of Providence with a Steady Hand, and can when he pleases change its Motions : He can stop the Sun, or Melt the Rocks, so that nothing possible is too hard for him.

4. As he is Omnipotent, and can do what he will, so he is Good and Gracious, and will do what he can for us. He is the God that made us, *And we are the People of his Pasture, and the Sheep of his Hand.* He is our Father and we are his Children ; He is our Saviour and we are his redeemed ones : He is more tender of us, than a Father of his only Son, than a Mother of her Sucking Child. And can a Father give his Son a Stone that asks him Bread, or a Serpent for a Fish ? And if our Earthly Parents, which sometimes want to give us, and sometime give us what they must want themselves ; that do not always know what is good for their Children, Subject to Passions, and may be unwilling to give, yet the very nearness of Nature over-comes them ; how much more shall God, who is our heavenly Father, and wants nothing, and knows all Things, *Give good Things to them that ask him ?* Mat. 7. 9. Nay when we are Mistaken and ask amiss, he even Crosses our Prayers for our good, gives us Bread for Stones, and Eggs when we beg for Scorpions.

5. As he is thus able and willing, so is he in all places, and at all Times near at hand and present with us, and ready to help us. Attends us through all the Passages and Difficulties of our Lives ; and we can need nothing but his Eye

is over us and he sees it, and we can suffer nothing but he is by us and takes notice of it. And there are no good Things we enjoy but we receive them from him, and it is his Hand that reaches them to us. And though he be in Heaven yet he fills all Places, and when we put up our Prayers to him he is by and hears us; and if we pray as we ought always answers us, either in what we pray for, or in what we should, either in what we ask, or what is better for us.

And now how can there be any greater Advantage, for this is an Advantage that brings in all other Advantages with it. This is a Store-house that is Inexhaustible, a Bank that can ne'er be Drained, a Fountain whose Waters can ne'er be cut off, but flows for ever.

Hither if we fly in any kind of Need, we are sure to be supplied. Hither if we come with an humble Confession of and hearty Sorrow for our Sins, with Hatred towards them, and Resolutions of forsaking them, and beg his Pardon, and Forgiveness of us, we are certain to receive it: For he did not only contrive the way for us to obtain it, before we could ask it, but he has bound himself by Promise, and it were a wrong to Christ's Purchase, and a breach of his own Word (which is firmer than the Pillars of the Earth) not to pardon all that are truly Penitent and beg it of him. For so St. *John*, 1 Epist. 1. 9. *If we confess our Sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins.* It is now become a Branch of his Fidelity to Pardon us, and Justice it self Pleads for our Forgiveness. And he has not only smoothed the way to it, and shed his Blood to Purchase it, and promised to give it to us, but he has given us many Instances of his Willingness to do it: And the Prodigal Son, and the Publican, and the Penitent Thief are Examples, how ready he

he is to answer us, and how few Words, rightly delivered, will wooe him to it.

And when we want any Thing that is good, necessary or convenient for our Bodies, he will never fail to answer us in what is needful, either by giving us what we pray for, if he see it fit for us; or by denying us, let's us see we are Mistaken in the Subject, and that it would prove Hurtful for us, if he should grant our Desires; and by so doing either gives us what we pray for, or makes us Content without it, which is Tantamount every whit as good for us.

And now who can consider this, and not look upon Man as the happiest Creature in the World! That when all other Creatures must take Things as they are, and as they happen, and have no sort of Influence to make any kind of Alteration in the Disposals and Events of Providence, Man has an easy Method Prescribed him of changing Things into better, and all Things into Good. What is there we can complain of, but if we run unto the Father of Spirits and the Governour of the World, he will remove our Troubles, and give us what we want, either one way or other, and oftentimes in ways we think least of? And if we do not want any thing and be troubled with nothing, what hinders that our whole Life should not be a continual Thanksgiving? Who would be Pinching and Covetous, Carking and Careful, to scrape up a Mass of this Worlds Wealth, to furnish them for after Years, when they have a good God to go to, and of whom they may ask what, and when they will, and asking receive? For so is the Apostle's advice; *Be careful for nothing: But in every Thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* Philip. 4. 6. And St. James, *Ye have not, because*
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ye ask not, ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss. Jam. 4. 2, 3. And St. John. *Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his Commandments, and do those Things that are pleasing in his sight.* 1. John 3. 22. If we do but take heed to carry our selves as we ought, nothing can hinder us from having what we should, and what is good for us. 'Tis only Sin that makes the breach and the difference betwixt us. For so the Prophet tells the *Jews*. *Your Iniquities have turned away these Things, and your Sins have withholden good Things from you.* Jer. 5. 25. If we be not awanting to our selves and our Duty, sooner will the Elements change or suspend their Properties, and the Clappers of the Spheres Chime backward to call in the Universe to our Assistance, than that God should be awanting to his Creatures that serve aright and pray unto him. And that these are not bare Complements, or the Effect of warm Discourse, See *the Sun going down upon the East Point of the Dial of Ahaz.* 2. Kings, 20. 11. *And the Moon standing still in the valley of Ajalon.* Josh. 10. 12. By this was *Hezekiah's* Life prolonged fifteen Years, and departed Souls called into their Bodies again. It has turned the Sea into dry Land, and the *Wilderness* into a *Flood*, and *Water* into *Human Gore*. It has tamed the Fierceness of wild Beasts and wilder Men; stopt the Mouths of hungry Lions in their Den, turned the fiery Furnace into open Air, and made Pulse and Water out-do all the Delicacies of the *Babylonian* Court. It has caused Rain, and it has caused Drought; it has routed Armies and it has taken Towns; it has made the Barren bear, the Poor rich, and the Sick well without the help of Physick.

Few *Conditions* we can happen into, but we may find some Precedents of Persons so relieved to encourage our Hope of and Endeavours after it. Who would not account it a great
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Advantage to have some rich, Powerful and kind Friend among Men, that is able and willing to relieve him? But alas! the Power of Mortals at the greatest is but Precarious, Limited and Imperfect, and their *Passions* are weak and short-lived, their Resolutions wavering, their Minds changeable, and they are apt to play at Fast and Loose with us: But God is a sure Friend, and will never fail us, never leave us, nor forsake us. What an huge Advantage then is it for us to have him to draw to? How firmly may we rely upon his Aid, and trust to his Goodness?

And who that believes and knows this will need much Courting to so Profitable a Duty. 'Tis true did it only bring us in Spiritual Advantages, many Men might be more ready to slight it, as not understanding the Worth, or not seeing the Danger, or not having a due Regard for their Souls. But being it is the Conduit that brings down and conveys even Temporal Blessings to us, methinks it should Invite, even indifferent Persons, to make use of such a Means, so powerful and easy: For the most Scraping Worldling is at far greater Pains, in pursuing worldly Methods and Devices to supply him with Necessaries or Over-plus. 'Tis true God gives us many Things without asking, or else we had never been in a Capacity of asking; he gave us Life and Being, and Nourisht us in our Infancy, fed us when we could not speak, and gave us Speech without asking; but it was to make us able to do so for what we need, and to Praise him for what he gave us before hand, and still continues unto us. And that 'tis tedious and uneasy to some Persons, proceeds chiefly from the Carnality of their Minds and the Neglect of the Duty. How can we expect good Things from God if we do not pray for them, and

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if we pray amiss we are not like to receive them; or if God should shed his Blessings upon Persons that do not ask them, or answer the Prayers even of the wicked, and grant them their Desires, yet they have different Effects upon them, serve only to upbraid their Guilt, and enhance their Punishment: For Blessings as such are only for the Righteous; and the Prayers of the wicked, whether they prevail or no, are turned into Sin; and so in the right Sense of the thing, the blind Man's Speech was Gospel, *God hears not Sinners.* John 9. 31. Those that lift up defiled Hands, and come with Rotten Hearts and Polluted Consciences, in Hypocrisie and outward Form; or pray for unlawful Things, or for unlawful Ends, their very Prayers are Abominable, and either bring down a Curse upon them in this World, or a more intolerable one in the World to come.

The good God Almighty so purifie our Hearts, and cleanse our Hands, and Hallow our Lips, and direct us in the Matter and Form of our Prayers, that we may ever obtain what we pray for, and pray for what we Want, so shall we never fail of a Comfortable Happiness here, and a compleat and endless one hereafter, through Jesus Christ our Lord; *To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Praise and Thanksgiving for ever more.* Amen.

SERMON II.

ROMANS XII. 12.

Continuing instant in Prayer.

IN my Former, I shewed you the Necessity and Advantages of this Duty of Prayer. I come now to the Times and Frequency of performing it, Exprest in the word *Continuing*.

And indeed if we consider how great and how many are our Wants, how great and how many our Dangers, how many, and how great the Blessings we receive at God's Hands, and those Multiplied upon us every Moment, we should be continually Exercised in this Holy Duty, would our Circumstances permit it, and spend our whole Lives in Prayers or in Praises. And though the good Woman was Mistaken, that reading that of the Apostles, *1 Theff. 5. 17. Pray without ceasing*, Spent her whole Life-time in it, to the Neglect of her Family, and let her *Children* want both Food and Dressing, till she was gently reprov'd: Yet so far as other necessary Duties will allow, the Business of our Calling, and the Offices of Humanity, and Works of Piety and Charity, 'tis doubtless very Commendable to employ as much Time as we can spare in this concerning Business. The Time we employ in the Affairs of the World is spent,

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but the Time we spend in Prayer is employ'd. And though we cannot tell what Time, or how often to Prescribe to all Persons, Men's Business and Concerns being infinite, and infinitely Various, yet there are some Times which are charged on all, laid as a common Task, shall I say, or indulged as a common Benefit to Man-kind. And there are some other Times besides these which become an acceptable Sacrifice, a free-will Offering, a reasonable Service, from those who have more Time and Leisure to perform it in. Those whom Providence hath called to a State of Ease and Liberty, freed them from the publick Curse, of Earning their Living with the Sweat of their Brows, are in all reason to look upon themselves as obliged to set apart a greater Portion of their Time for this grand Duty, than they, that have it taken up in the acquiring the Necessaries of Livelihood. Of the former sort (that is such as is incumbent upon all) are the Times of publick and the Times of private Prayer. Again publick Prayer is two fold, That in the Church, and That in the Family.

I. That in the Church, The first and chiefest of which is that of the Lord's-Day, a Day that is set apart for that Purpose, and which all are commanded to allow themselves Time and Leisure to attend: For to what end do we think are we forbidden our daily Labours, and to Cease from secular Employments, but that our Bodies may be at Liberty, and our Minds at Ease, to Address our selves to the Majesty of Heaven, with more Preparedness, Earnestness and Attention of a Rational and Spiritual Worship; to beg what is requisite and necessary, the Food and Nurishment of our Souls, which would be wholly neglected and Starved, were all our Time taken up in the Provision for
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the Flesh. For we are not to look upon the Lord's Day only as a Sabbath of Rest common to us with our Beasts, wherein to refresh our tired Spirits and wearied Bodies, by giving them a Relaxation from past Toils, and to Envi-gorate and enable them for greater Burdens afterwards: But by a more solemn and publick Repentance, to beg Pardon for our Sins for the Week past, and God's Grace and Assistance for the Week to come; and to give him Thanks and Praise for all the daily Blessings we receive; and to lay up a Spiritual Stock and Treasure for our Souls on the Lord's Day for all the six that follow it, as we do for our Bodies in the six before for the Sunday to come. And sith we do as it were thus pay God at once and in the Gross, that Service and Homage we owe and ought to pay him every Day, did not the necessary affairs of a Temporal Life call us from it, and which are apt to beclug and cumber our Thoughts, and render us unfit for Spiritual De-votion; Sith I say, we do thus pay God in One what we should in Seven, how diligent should we be, not only in doing it as to the Thing but in multiplying our Care and In-tention to the well doing of it, that it may be accepted as a Commutation for all the rest of the Week, I mean as to this more publick and solemn Exercise of it. And that not only in respect to our selves, but also in regard to the whole Church and Country whereof we are Members. For besides that every Man *generally* bears a Share both in *publick* Benefits and *publick* Dangers, and so consults his own good in the publick, yet as Christians we ought to have that common Concern, and that mutual Charity and Fellow-feeling, as to be concerned for others as nearly as if it touch'd our selves, even when it does not in any other respect, but in that of

the Species and Brotherhood. For so saith the Apostle, *When one Member suffers, all the Members suffer with it : Or one Member rejoyce, all the Members rejoyce with it.* 1 Cor. 12. 26. *Bear ye one anothers Burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ.* Gal. 6. 2. *Rejoyce with them that do rejoyce, and weep with them that weep.* Rom. 12. 15. And indeed in all sorts of publick Petitions and Deprccations, the most are concerned, and the more they are that are united in this affair make the greater Influence on Heaven, and most of all when the whole Church joins with one Mouth and one Heart, with Zeal and Devotion. And he that ordinarily or wilfully absents himself, cuts himself off from the body of the Church, Judges and makes himself no Member of it, or which is near Akin, is a dead and unprofitable piece of it. As that part of the body is Distempered, that does not do its Duty aright, and that quite dead and Gangered that has no Feeling of or common concern for the rest. And in this Sense I take the word *Continuing* to be Meant, that we should be constant, and without Interruption at these publick Conventions, not to absent our selves often, or usually, or wilfully ; not to make Excuses, and frame Business, or feign Indisposition on purpose to stay at home, and is what the Apostle to the *Hebrews* urges, *That we should not forsake the assembling of our selves together.* Heb. 10. 25. That we should not Neglect to give our Attendance on such Times of solemn Worship, set apart for that purpose by the Church, which obliges all that are Members of it ; but to frequent such Times and Places with Love, Zeal and Devotion.

But of this sort of publick Worship and Prayer there are also other Times, as the Fasts and Festivals of the Church ;
which

which though they may be thought not so indispensably to oblige all that are Members of it, so Men do not Create Necessities and feign Business on purpose to avoid them, but come when they can, and rather put off their Temporal Concerns whenever they Tolerably may, to pay their Respect and bear their Part in them; yet are necessarily required of all those that have Time and Leisure for it: For 'tis certain that they that have the greatest Estates do ordinarily reap the Benefit of them by the Labour and Diligence of other Men's Hands; and as one are working with the Earth to make it Teem out its Bowels, or reaping its Crops, so should the other be working with Heaven for a Blessing upon their Labours; that the Heavens may be Influential and the Earth willing to yield them an answerable Reward, and as it were to pay that part of Devotion for them, which the continual Toyl of others, renders them incapable of performing with that Solemnness and Formality: For doubtless in this of Time as well as other Talents, God expects according to the Measures he gives, much of them that have much, less of them that have less.

Another sort of publick Prayer is That in the Family, which indispensably obliges all that are Masters of them, to perform constantly, and with the same Fervor and Diligence, unless by some great and urgent Concern they be otherwise sometimes let and hindred, but That of a real, not framed Necessity: For let them look upon it, that it must be a great *Excuse* that *Frees* it from a Sin of *Omission*: For the Master of a Family must not look upon himself as such, only in respect of exacting the Service and Obedience of those that are under him, or providing them with natural Sustenance, and the Concerns of a Temporal Life, but

in his Sphere and Station, as having the Charge and Care of their Souls. For every Head of a Family is a Priest in his own House, in this respect at least of offering up the publick Prayers of his own, whether Children or Servants, or whomever else are for the present his Domesticks, unless he have some under his Roof, either ordinarily or by Accident whom he thinks better qualified for that Office, or to whom he thinks fit to delegate it.

And though there may be some whose Education has not furnish'd them with sufficient Abilities to compile their own Sentiments into a fit Form of Words, or not able to read those which the Church or other Men have set out for them (of which I hope we have not many in Comparison in such a Nation as Ours) yet there are few so illiterate or weak, but may commit the Lord's Prayer to Memory; and if they do but use this constantly and with Devotion, 'tis what *David* said of *Goliath's* Sword, there is none like it. And let no one think that it is too short a Form, or in any Thing defective, for he was Wisdom it self, even God himself, who both made, and Commanded us to use it. *Luke* 11. 2. God does not measure our Prayers by their length, *Nor will he hear us the sooner for our much speaking*, and 'tis heathenish to think so. *Mat.* 6. 7. For the Publican made a short Prayer, but it was effectual. *God be merciful unto me a Sinner.* *Luke* 18. 13. And the Thief upon the Cross prayed. *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom.* *Luke* 23. 42. And that was a short Prayer too, but it was long enough to work a Miracle, and save a dying Soul.

A Man's House is his Castle, and every Master of a Family is Lord there, at least so far as belongs to the Regulating
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and Government of it. And therefore this Duty should be more constantly and continually performed, and can but meet with few Cases where it may be omitted, as private Prayer sometimes does, as I shall after shew. For when a Man has indisposed himself, through his own Fault and Folly, that's a double Sin; his Indisposition is one, and his Omission of Prayer is another.

And that is so far from Excusing that it Aggravates his Crime. But when they have Friends or Strangers in their House, perhaps, even good Men may omit it; but 'twere well if it were not so: For I can but think of two Things that may put us upon the Omission, and they are both answerable.

First. That we are ashamed any stranger should discover our Weakness, in the Matter or Form of our Prayer, or else in the Manner and Method of our expressing it. But to this, if thou beest in Capacity to use them in their Order, there are none better than the publick *Prayers* of the *Church*, either for the use of thine own Family, or Strangers hearing: For praying in a Family is publick, and the Prayers of the Church, are publick for that end; and the Difference is only this (abating the Consecration of the place) that every Family is a lesser Church, and every Church is a greater Family. So that whoever Grudges thy using these Prayers, provided it be with Gravity and Decency, as all publick Prayers ought, has a greater grudge against the Church than against thee; or thou art blasphemed, or ill thought of for the Churches sake, which is the Spouse of Christ, and that is one sort of *Martyrdom*; or *Persecution* for the Churches sake, and has its Reward in Store. But if thou be not so qualified, but offerest up a Prayer of thine own,
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or some others Composing; yet he is no good Christian that can think much at thee for doing thy Endeavours in a right Way and necessary Duty; he is no Friend that will Divulge any Imperfection or Weakness; he either Apprehends, or Mistakes to be in it. Not, but that we ought to take care that our Prayers be as Good as we can get, and then no Matter who is by, though the King was there, though *Solomon* himself was there, for a greater than *Solomon* is there also: And we ought not in publick Prayer to speak that to God, which we are ashamed to speak before Men.

Again, Thou, perhaps art afraid to be thought Precise or Hypocritical in it, and so Choosest rather to omit it, than undergo such a Scandal: But to this I Answer, 'tis thine own Concern to see to that, whether it be so with thee or not. If thou doest not use to pray constantly with thy Family, but takest it up upon such an Occasion, to be thought to do so, and seem to be more Religious than thou art, or to Vaunt thy Parts or Elocution, tis then indeed Hypocritical and Sinful: 'Tis done to have Praise of Men. And thou hast thy Reward, whatsoever thou gettest, whether a good Word or a bad. But if in perfect Duty and Obedience thou beest constant in the Performance of it at other Times, as well as this, thou art then satisfied in thine own Conscience that whosoever judgeth otherwise of thee, judgeth Rashly, Uncharitably, without Reason, and if Men will be unreasonable who can help it; thou art to Answer for thine own Faults but not for theirs. Consider that 'tis publick Prayer and not private; private Prayer Ceases to be so when it once becomes publick, and is fitter for the Closet than the Hall; but in the other the more publick the better; the more that join the more

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Prevalent. Consider thou art not about thine own private particular Concerns only, but begging a Blessing on all that belongs to thee, thine whole Family and the Stranger that is within thy Gates ; so that hereby thou dost the most oblige him ; this is the highest Entertainment thou canst Treat him with, the Heartiest Welcome thou canst give him.

Again, Consider that it is not only thine own Sin, a Sin against thy self, in Omitting a Duty that so highly Concerns thee, a Sin against thy Family, in depriving them of the Benefit and Success of thy Prayers, but 'tis a Sin against thy Friend too : For what the Apostle says of Meat, we may say of Prayer in this case, *Now walkest thou not Charitably.* Rom. 14. 15. Charity Obliges us to invite others to good Works, or Encourage them in them, especially by our Example, as being more Prevalent with them. Now whether thy Friend be constant in this Duty (as all Men ought) or no, either way thy using or Omitting it may have Influence upon him. If he be constant at it and find thee so too, this Confirms him in his Duty and Practice, and he sees he does no more than his Neighbours ; what some he sees does besides, and others should. But if he do, and thou do not use it, that may then make him fall off from the Strictness of his Piety ; and either think it not so Universally and Necessarily binding ; or else that he shall make as good a Shift as others, if he give it over. If he do not use it nor thou neither, this again Confirms him in his Neglect and Impiety ; and he may begin to think Religion but a Trick or Imposture ; or Prayer particularly but a Complement and not to be used among Friends. But if he do not use it and thou

do, this will be apt to prick his Conscience for his own Neglect, make him ashamed to come behind others, whom perhaps he thinks himself above; or to recollect what a Difference will be made between his Friend and him at the Day of Judgement, in Proportion to that Difference he finds already; and according to that Judgment which he is ready to pass upon himself as Rational and Just, this may make him resolve to betake himself to that Duty in his own Family which he has so long Neglected. And so thy Prayer has been a Sermon too, and preach'd thy Friend into Reformation and Amendment. And though 'tis certain no good Works ought to be Vaunted, yet our Saviour bids his Disciples let theirs shine before Men, *That they too may glorifie their Father which is in Heaven.* Mat. 5. 16. That is, that they also may see and imitate them: For we glorifie God in nothing more than our own Improvement.

And then for private Prayer, we may consider That also in a double Relation, as to the Times of Performance; one of which is indispensably obliging to all, the other expected from Persons of greater Leisure and Opportunity. That required of all, is every Evening and every Morning. For Prayer is the Christian Sacrifice, whereby we attune Heaven, and move God to be Propitious and Merciful, Gracious and Bountiful to us. And if we consider how many Wants and how many Dangers we lye under and are open to, every Day and every Night, 'tis highly necessary we should beg God's Grace and Protection; and not enter upon any new Day, or any approaching Night, without invoking his Blessing and safe Guard. Every Morning we do as it were begin our Lives anew, and should lift up
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our Hearts unto the Lord, and begin well that we may end so; put our selves into such a Frame of Spirit, and beg God to assist and strengthen us, that we may live that Day as if we were living for Eternity: For the Eternal Day, for ought we know may be the next, or at least may be so to us. Not to let our Temporal Concerns take up more of our Time or Care than necessarily they must, or may in Prudence be laid out upon them; but by no Means to Juggle out those of our Spiritual. Considering always that we have a greater Concern upon our Hands, and that is the Care of our Souls, and Provision for an Everlasting State, which Depends upon the Management of every Day we Live. That we may be kept out of Temptations, or enabled to resist and over-come them, and that we set our selves to do all manner of good Works, as Occasion and our Abilities shall cut out for us. And every Day that Closes on us, should close with God, we should let him be our *Alpha* and *Omega*, the first and last in our Thoughts; and beg his Pardon for the Frailties and Miscarriages of the past Day, and call our selves to Account how much we are indebted to him, and endeavour to set streight with him. And I doubt the best of us will find that true which the Famous Painter said *Nulla dies sine linea*, but alas! in a quite different Sense to what he meant it in. No Day that has gone over our Heads, but we have made some Blots and Blurs, some Scrawls and irregular Twinings; some Sins committed, or some Duties omitted, or carelessly or imperfectly performed: For which 'tis highly necessary we should beg God Almighty's Pardon and Forgiveness. Many Blessings we have received from his Hand, usual or extraordinary; some good Thing given, or some Evil we are delivered from, for which we ought to magnifie his Holy

Name. But if nothing has happened but what is common, yet we have never the less Reason to Praise his Name, that the great and prolifick Blessing of Life, his sparing us from Day to Day, and not cutting us off in our Sins, preserving us in the Land of the living, and on this side Hell, is so constantly continued to us, that it comes as certain as the Day. And when Night Approaches, 'tis an Emblem of that Darknes which is called *The Land of Oblivion*.

And Sleep is an Image of Death. And when we lie down in our Beds, we may imagine them our Graves, and when we fall asleep, for ought we know, we may awake next Morning in another World. And therefore how dare we enter upon this dismal State without making our Peace with God, and begging his Protection and Safe-guarding of us from all the Spirits and Powers of Darknes?

And this, not upon a Spiritual Account only, but upon a Temporal also. For when God has been so Merciful and Good to us as to give us the Blessing of a new Day, how uncomfortable and uneasy would it be to us, if he did not give us a Thousand Blessings besides? Nay how Troublesome and Miserable would it be, did he not deliver us from a Thousand Thousand Dangers we are liable to? How Toylsome and Tedious would the Night be to us without Rest and Refreshment? And 'tis he alone that giveth his beloved Sleep. When he might suffer us to be affrighted with *Spectrums* or Melancholick Dreams; or to be struck through with Pains and Aches; that we should wish for Day long before it comes, and for Night again soon after the Day is dawned. For such Things as these would be but small Tokens of what the infernal Fiends, that hover about us, would do for us, did not his Almighty Power curb and restrain them. Sith

Sith therefore there is none of us can plead an Exemption from these Wants and Dangers, the Duty must be necessarily binding unto all. Sith our Wants and Dangers and Blessings are renew'd every Morning and every Night, as the Two great Periods that measure out and determine our Life, 'tis necessary this Duty should be as often performed.

But then this sort of Prayer may sometimes admit of Excuses, provided they be not sought for and framed, but such as are necessary, and as much avoided as we can. For a Man's Privacy and Solitude cannot always be enjoyed as he could desire, and so the Opportunities of his Addressing himself to God in his usual and Solemn manner may be shortned. For the Duty it self is private Prayer, and as such, 'tis as Essential to it to be private as that it should be Prayer. And when a Man has no Opportunity of being in Private, he is excusable for that Time: Provided if he be in a Friends House, or on a Journey, or in Company; provided, I say, that he make use of all honest and civil Means to perform it if he can; and where he cannot be so private as he would, yet let him make himself as private as he can; I mean, let him sometimes, notwithstanding his Company, be retiring into his Soul, and the Presence of God, by some good Thought, or pithy Collect, or short Ejaculation; performing what he can, when he cannot do what he would: So may we see a true Lover, notwithstanding his Diversions, still dropping into Studies, and about other Business in the midst of Company. And a true Love indeed for God and Religion, and this Solemn Duty of it, would make us do so too. However let it be only want of Opportunity that makes us omit it, even in its Formalities and Circumstances; and even then let us make up as much as we can, what is
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wanting in outward Expressions, in the Essential and more Internal Parts of it. We may use the Lord's Prayer, or the *Doxology*, or the shorter Litanies of, *Lord have mercy upon us*, and the like, without a set Dress of Articulate Words, or putting any notable Interruption upon Society. And God in many Things accepts the Will for the Deed, and here will do it, because in Prayer especially he looks more at the Heart than Voice. And where there is this Heart and good Will, such Opportunities may be extended far beyond Expectation. And we have had Instances of some Persons, that have diverted Multiplicity of Business, and Stollen so much Time, even, from urgent Concerns, as to attend this more urgent and concerning Duty. That have in a Journey taken their Chambers long before they have taken their Lodgings, and refresh'd their Souls before their Bodies.

But besides These, of Morning and Evening necessarily incumbent upon all, there are other Times to be observed by Persons of greater Leisure and better Opportunities, several Times a Day, as Occasion will permit, and the Strictness of their Piety and Zeal will prompt them to. For thus Pious *David* Affirms of himself. *Seven Times a Day do I praise thee.* Psal. 119. 164. *In the Night his Song shall be with me, and my Prayer unto the God of my Life.* Psal. 42. 8. *I cry in the Day Time, and in the Night season, and am not Silent.* Psal. 22. 2. And indeed if we consider all our Wants and all our Dangers, the Necessity and Advantages of Prayer; how many Blessings and Mercies we are every Minute receiving from Almighty God. That continual Sense we should always bear about us, of the Presence of God, our own Mortality, the Hope and Expectation of

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Heaven, and the Provision for another Life, wherein we must be happy or miserable for ever, we should need none other Motive to Stir us up to the continual Exercise and Performance of this Duty whatsoever our Employments be. Those that lead more retired and Cloystered Lives would be constant and frequent in the Practice of it, with a more sacred and formal Solemnity ; and those that are thronged with worldly Concerns and bodily Labours would be often on a Day lifting up their Hearts unto the Lord, in shorter Phrases, Pathetick Ejaculations, Pious Wishes and Joyful Praises to the God and Author of all our Blessings.

In a Word, we should look upon the Care of our Souls as the main Business of our Lives ; and so sequester our selves from the World and outward Concerns as much as we prudently can ; and long to be Conversing with God, and have our Society in Heaven, whither we hope to come, and so Dedicate our selves in all feasible Instances to Prayers and Praises, that when our Sun shall set, and the Lord shall call upon us, we may be found so doing ; that we may die with Prayers in our Mouths, as having been the Employment of our Lives ; that our last Breath may be spent in *A Lord have mercy upon us. Or Christ Jesus receive my Soul.*

God of his infinite mercy grant us to be all of one Mind, that we may with one Heart and one Voice, continue and frequent the Exercise of our publick Prayers, to him, and for, and with one another. God grant we may with Singleness of Heart, and Heartiness of Devotion, continue constant in making our private Addresses to him, at all Times, and upon all Occasions. And God continue the
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light of his Gospel, and the Exercise of our Religion to us; that we may never want Opportunity of Addressing to him, in publick, and in private, to the Praise and Glory of his Name, to the Good and Salvation of all our Souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who Receives and Tenders our Prayers for us to the Throne of Grace, and makes them come down upon us in all the Blessings of this Life, Spiritual and Temporal, and the fitting us for a better, where our Prayers will be changed into Praises, *To whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all Honour and Glory for evermore. Amen.*

S E R M O N III.

ROMANS XII. 12.

Continuing instant in Prayer.

H I T H E R T O I have shewn you the Necessity and Advantage of Prayer, with the Times and Frequency of performing it. I now come to speak something of the Qualifications of our Prayers, how they ought to be performed which I take to be implied in the word *Instant*, or as it is joined with *Continuing* in the word προσκαρτερῶντες, not persevering only, but with Might and Main, as it were Wrestling to prevail.

Now the Qualifications of our Prayers may either respect the Matter (*i.e.*) the Subject and Substance of the Things we pray for, or the manner of Performance (*i.e.*) with suitable Zeal and Devotion. The Former of these is hinted at by St. James. 4. 3. *Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask Amiss, that ye may consume it upon your Lusts.* The Latter is described in. 1 Tim. 2. 8. *I will therefore that Men pray every where, lifting up Holy Hands, without Wrath and Doubting.* The first of these we may perhaps be allowed to call, the Quality of the Thing, The Second the Qualification of the Person; the Former of the Prayer it self, the Latter of him that offers it.

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But that I may offer my Thoughts to you with greater freedom, and in a way which I think may be more Beneficial for you, and more Advantageous to your Memory, and giving you a Thorow Insight into the whole, I shall not insist Precisely on these Two by way of Distinction, but take them as they shall fall in Alternately, in a Method which I conceive to be more Natural, and I hope more Edifying, and that as you or I were just now going to begin our Prayers.

In the first place, Therefore before we begin our Prayers, it is highly necessary, we should allow our selves some Space of Time for deliberate Thoughts, and serious Application of our Minds to what we are about to do, and that in this Four Fold respect.

1. In Reference to that Supreme Deity, to whom we are Addressing. And that is, the great Majesty of Heaven and Earth, that made and upholds all Things, in whose Hand is the very Breath of our Nostrils, and our Everlasting Fate of Good or Ill. So glorious and Tremendous a Being, that the very Angels are forced to veil their Faces, when they come into his more immediate Presence, or are delivering any Message to him. So that if Man had continued in his State of Innocency, and never Sinned, yet he was by Nature and Creation much lower than the Angels, and so not to approach his Presence without a more Astonishing Dread. And we may lawfully say with *Job*, *If we were Righteous, yet how durst we answer him, or lift up our Heads before him.* Job 9. 15. — 10. 15. *And our Saviour, who was Innocence it self, when he went to Prayer fell on his Face to the Ground.* Mat. 26. 39. Mark 14. 35. *Which was the most*
humble

humble Posture that could be. And therefore we ought not to approach his Presence with Rashness, Unadvisedly, Indiscreetly, but with Sobriety, and in the Fear of God, and with the Profoundest Reverence imaginable.

2. In Reference to our selves, who are miserable Sinners, Enemies to God, contrary to him, as light and Darkness. He is Holiness and we are Pollution; he is Purity and we are Uncleaness. *Our God is a consuming Fire. Heb. 12. 29. And we are dry Stubble. Job 13. 25.* And when these two meet, 'tis easy, but withal Sad to guess what the Result will be, Speedy Destruction and Consumption to Ashes. So that we cannot approach unto God, as we are Sinners, but his very Presence is our Ruin. When we have thus briefly, but seriously considered, the Majesty of God to Create our Reverence, and our own Unworthiness to bring us to Humility. Let us then,

3. Lift up our Eyes to Heaven, and fix them on our Saviour, who sits there Cloathed in our humane Nature, to be a Screen between God and us, through whom, the two Parties, God and Man, are reconciled, who has united the two Natures in one Person, *The Mediatour between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus. 1 Tim. 2. 5.* Who as he has Assumed our Nature, so he has espoused our Cause, and Pleads it with God, and receives our Prayers, and offers them to his Father, with his own All-powerful Intercession. But he is God as well as Man, and so can receive nothing from us, but what is Pure and Holy; and we, as Men, and Sinners, have nothing to give him but what is unclean, and as such, unacceptable to him.

And therefore,

4. We should consider the Necessity of his Holy Spirit's helping our Addresses. Of our selves we can neither think a good Thought, nor speak a Good Word, nor do a good Act; but whatsoever comes from us, is like the Blind and the Lame in Sacrifice, maimed, defective, unclean, abominable; and so our Prayers going towards Heaven, whatsoever the Substance of them be, would be thrown back again into our Faces, and with Vengeance upon our Heads; if the Holy Ghost did not sanctifie them in the Conception, and wipe off all their Sullies in the Ascent. Every good and every perfect Gift is from above, and the Spirit puts good Thoughts and Motions into our Hearts, and helps our Infirmities, and Sanctifies our Lips and Hallows our Sacrifice, and so it comes Pure and Holy to our Saviour's Hand, who with his own Intercession makes it Acceptable and Prevalent with his Father.

It is necessary, or at least would be very Expedient, that we should by some such previous Considerations as these, lift up our Hearts to the ever-Blessed and Glorious *Trinity*, that it would please the Father Almighty, for the sake of Christ Jesus, his Son, our Saviour, to assist us with his Holy Spirit, which Christ by his Contract with his Father, and his Obedience and Sufferings consequent thereto, has purchased for, and sent unto us, I say, by the same Holy and Blessed Spirit, to qualifie us for, to assist and enable us to offer up a Spiritual and acceptable Sacrifice to him, through Christ Jesus our Lord. And we shall find this much more beneficial for us, than any the greatest Length or Noise of our Prayers. Having thus endeavoured to set our Hearts aright, and begged a Blessing and Success upon our Undertakings,

dertakings, we may with the greater Hopes and Seriousness go on to the Substance of our Prayers, which we may thus consider apart.

1. Seeing it is Sin that made the first Breach between God and us, therefore 'tis necessary we should begin with a begging God's Pardon for it, and being reconciled to him that he may hear and Answer us. Without this we are undone forever, Doomed to everlasting Destruction of Soul and Body. And therefore as we would avoid for ever Perishing in Eternal Torments, we should be very Earnest and Pressing to be delivered from our Sins, which will unavoidably bring it upon us. And to qualify us for a Reception of such Pardon, we should endeavour to Possess our Hearts with a Thorow Sense of our Sins, both as to their Number and Greatness; to abominate them, Abhor our selves for them, and resolve to forsake them. What an infinite Guilt they have laid upon our Souls and Consciences, and what an Insupportable Weight of Punishment is due unto them. That nothing in the whole World of Beings can cleanse us from the one, or free us from the other, but the Precious Blood of the Son of God which was shed for us. To this we should fly as to our only Sanctuary, firmly believing that as he shed it for us, so he will undoubtedly apply it to us, if we beg it of him as we should. *For he Delights in Mercy, and came to Heal the broken Hearted, to Cure the broken Spirit, to dwell with the Humble and Contrite ones.* Micah 7. 18. Luke 4. 18. Isaiah 57. 15. And because our Affections to Sin are naturally so strong and powerful, and our Endeavours when we set against it, so dead and weak, that we can do nothing of our selves towards the forsaking of it, and getting a Victory over it, but
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that every Temptation is able to over-come us, and by degrees to bring us into Obedience and Captivity to it. Therefore in the

2. Place, We should earnestly petition for God's Grace and Spiritual Assistance to work a thorow Hatred in us against it; to furnish us with good Resolutions, and sufficient Abilities, to resist its Motions, to fly from its Allurements, and withstand its Temptations, that it may by no means get the Dominion over us. That we set our selves with Heartiness against it, taking to our selves the Sword of the Spirit, the shield of Faith, the Helmet of Salvation, whereby we may be enabled to withstand our Spiritual Enemies, to repel the firey Darts of the Wicked, which are Levelled at us to wound our Souls; that we may put them to Shame and Flight and Confusion. *Our strength is Weakness, but 'tis Christ that strengtheneth us.* Philip. 4. 13. *Our Flesh is Troublesome, but Christ's Grace is sufficient for us.* 2 Cor. 12. 9. 'Tis he alone that over-came Sin and Satan by his own Strength, that Chained them to his Chariot-Wheels, led them Captive before all the World, *Spoiled Principalities and Powers, made a shew of them openly and Triumphed over them in it.* Col. 2. 15. And tis only by a Communication of his Graces, and the concurring Power of his Spiritual Motions and Irresistable Strength, that they at any time yield unto us, and flee before us. *Without whom we can do nothing.* John 15. 5. But with him all Things. But because a Negative Piety will not serve our Turn, or rather there is no such thing alone, *But those that cease to do evil, must learn to do well.* Isaiah 1. 16, 17. The one gains Ground as the other loses; and we cannot forsake our Sins aright without becoming better, nor become better

better without forsaking our Sins. And many active Duties are required of us; and we must set our selves to a positive Holiness. Therefore

3. We should pray for his Spirit to dwell within us, and be present with us, to inspire our Hearts, and put good Motions into us; to enlighten our Minds, and inform our Judgments, and direct our Wills, and Spiritualize our Affections, and Sanctifie our Thoughts, and Words, and Actions; to guide the whole Man in our whole Lives, to work the Works of Righteousness, and do those Things that are pleasing in his sight. There are many Things to be done to qualifie us for Heaven, and those must be done constantly, that they may become Habitual and Natural to us, that is, we must become new Creatures, new Men, lead new Lives, and from living Principles, and despise the World, and the Things thereof, and have our Conversation in Heaven, and live here below, as if we sought a Country which is above, an Heavenly City, the new *Jerusalem*, where we hope to live and reign for ever, with God and Christ and Saints to Eternal Ages. And this is a Work so extreamly Difficult, and considering the Corruption of our Natures, and the Circumstances we are in, impossible for us, without a great Measure of God's Spirit, and a vast Stock of Christian Graces, a constant Sedulity and Diligence, and a never-failing Perseverance: *For only he that endureth unto the end, shall be saved. Mat. 10. 22. And he that overcometh shall eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. Rev. 2. 7.*

And these Two, the Pardon of our Sins and Newness of Life, are Things so necessary for us, that without them we are undone for ever. And therefore for these, and whatever
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Tends toward them, we may pray without Reserve, and with the greatest Zeal and Fervency imaginable : For if our Prayers be not Answered in this, we perish Eternally, and a final Miscarriage herein can never be repaired.

Here we are sure we are right as to the Substance of our Prayers; and these are Things God is most of all willing to grant us, because they are not only good, but necessary for us, even the greatest Good that can be bestowed upon us. And therefore in these Petitions we should double our Zeal, and enspirit our Devotions, and never cease till we get an Answer. For God Loves to see us Importunate for such Things, as being the greatest Testimony what a Value we set upon them. And when he hides his Face from us, and seems to deny us, 'tis to improve our Longings after them, and by the Difficulty of the Acquisition make us prize them the more when we have obtained them. And therefore in these Spiritual Concerns we should be extreamly earnest, sue for our Pardon with such a Concernment of Soul and Vehemence of Spirit, as if we were just now Tumbling into Hell without it. And Supplicate with that Tenderneſs and Paſſion for Spiritual Graces, an Active piety, and Holineſs of Mind, and Heavenlineſs of Frame, and Godlineſs of Spirit, as if we were just now taking our Flight above the Clouds, and ſpringing into Heaven.

And then, For Temporal Concerns and the Affairs of our Body or Estate, our Name and Fortunes, our Prayers should be as constant, because we have received, and expect daily Blessings, and have daily need of them. But then we must neither pray for unlawful Things, nor for unlawful Ends. Our Desires must be always Modest and our Designs good. Considering always, that the body is but a Case for the
Soul,

Soul, and this World in order to a better. And therefore we ought not to pray to be Rich, or Great, or Honourable, I mean in what the World Accounts so. Covetousness and Ambition are Sins, and not only lead to Hell, but are like it, cry more, more, and are never satisfied. A little suffices Nature, and that's enough which Nature is Content with. He that has enough has as much as he that has more, for he that has more than enough has but a Burthen and a Charge. No Man was ever Damned for being Poor; and you know *Lazarus* got the Start of *Dives*; and a Man's as near Heaven in a Cottage as on a Throne. And if ever we desire to have our Fortunes Augmented, it should always be with a respect to Piety, that we may be better qualified to serve God or our Neighbours, to his Glory, or our own, or others Comfort. We must not desire to be Great, that we may be Oppressive; nor to be Full-handed, *That we may consume it upon our Lusts*; we must not pray for Strength of Body, to be Wanton and Amorous; nor for a Good Name and Reputation amongst the People, to give Countenance and Progress to Vice and Impiety, &c. But we must look that our Petitions be Grave and Serious and Concerning, sometimes Necessary, always Good and Lawful, both in the Thing and in the Circumstance, in the Matter and Design.

But then in these Temporal Things we should never be too Importunate, because we do not know that they are always Good for us, or not so Good for us, but that it may be more Prejudicial to some else; or God, perhaps has some Designs of a greater Good upon us; or sends some Sickness or Misfortune, or keeps us Weak and Poor, to bring us to our selves and him; or to Exercise some Graces we have been

flow or defective in. Sith therefore we are liable to mistake either our selves, or the Things we pray for, that all Things are not always Necessary for us, nor some Things Good for us at sometimes, we should Modestly Refer them to God's Wisdom and Goodness, that he would do what is Good for us, be it what it will, what he will for us; never mattering so much what befalls us here, so our everlasting Fate be secure. And now for the main Body and Substance of all our Prayers, they should have these several Qualifications.

1. A diligent Attention and Pious Care of what we are about. We must by no Means come into God's more immediate Presence with loose and Trifling Spirits, with wandering and scattered Thoughts: But we must Summon up the whole Man to an Intent and Spiritual Devotion; the Things are Great and Concerning we Petition for, and the Deity we approach is Sacred and Aweful, and therefore as the Matter ought to be Serious and Grave, so our Words should be few and pithy, our Demeanour humble and Devout.

2. With Zeal and Fervency of Spirit. We must not only have no wandring and By-thoughts, and mind what we say, but we must raise our Affections to the highest Pitch, and pour out our Souls before God. It is not an heedless running over a few Words, and saying our Prayers out of Custom, that will serve the Turn, but if we be rightly sensible of our Wants and Dangers, of having the one supplied, and the other prevented, we must do it with an Earnestness and Warmth suitable to the Occasion and the Business. For this is it which is meant by praying by the Spirit, That is, not a saying what comes next to Hand without Premeditation and Form, but a Diligence, Attention
and

and Zeal in what we offer up to so Sacred a Majesty, and in such concerning Matters.

3. We must do it with a profound Humility, always considering our own Unworthiness to receive any Thing that is Good at God's Hand; how Heinously we have provoked him, and what is our due for so doing (*viz.*) Hell and Damnation: And therefore whatsoever Good Things he bestows upon us is meer Mercy and Pity, Grace and Favour, abundant Charity and Largeesse, that he should take so much Notice of us vile Wretches, as to give us any Thing but Ruine.

4. We must pray in Faith, nothing doubting of his Good Will towards us. Our Misery and Wretchedness should drive us to God, not away from him: For he has sent his Son, and given us his Spirit, on purpose to qualifie us for his Mercy, to make us capable and willing of receiving, and has promised to hear and Answer us, and will certainly do it, if we trust unto him.

5. We must do it with Purity and Sincereness. We must not retain any Affections for our Sins, or Coldness towards Piety; we must not dissemble and Collogue with God, but Purge our Hearts and Minds from all Sensualness and Carnality, and Breathe after *Holiness* and *Godliness of Conversation*.

6. We must always use our own Endeavours in labouring after the Things we pray for. When we pray against Temptations, we must Study to avoid them; when we pray against any particular Sin, we should watch all Opportunities of taking Advantage against it, and shunning all Occasions that might lead us to it; when we pray for any particular Grace,

we should Labour to Possess our Souls of it, and Encourage every little Beginning and Step toward it. So he that Prays for Chastity, must not come at the Stews; he that Prays against Drunkenness must not sit long at the Wine; but Associate himself to Modest and Sober and Innocent Conversation; he that Prays for a moderate Augmentation of his Fortunes, must be diligent in his Calling; he that Prays for a Constant Sufficiency, and a lasting Supply of Worldly Necessaries, must not be lavish of what God has given him, &c. A small Estate honestly got, and well Husbanded, may be as serviceable as larger Revenues without them. 'Tis God's Blessing that maketh Rich, and he will not ordinarily prosper Deceit and Fraud, Wrong and Injustice, but a Pious Endeavour, and just Dealing, may like the Widow's Cruise of Oyl, fill many Barrels, and make a few Penny's do the Office of a Talent. God gives us many Things without Asking, but yet he would have us pray for them; they are his Clouds that drop Fatness, but yet he would not have us be Idle Sluggards, but to put to our helping hand, and Co-operate with his Providence.

Thus have I given you a brief Description of the Nature, Necessity, and Advantages of Prayer, the Times and Frequency of performing it, the manner and Method it is to be done in, with the several Qualifications requisite thereto, in which you may be sensible I might have much enlarged my self. But as all the Discourses in the World are little to us, unless we give diligent heed to, and resolve to follow them. So to those that have done so, I hope what has been said may be sufficient. Only I shall Crave leave for our farther Encouragement and Direction, to insist a-while upon the Influence our Prayers have upon us, which per-
haps

haps is a thing not so ordinarily taken Notice of. How Instrumental they are in the Efficacy they have upon us, towards the procuring and helping us to the Things we pray for; that our Prayers and their Answers are so closely Link'd, that they go hand in hand, and we are receiving what we pray for, even whilst we do so.

For thus, when we are praying against our Sins, and for a Pardon of them, and do it as we ought. Lord what an Hatred and Detestation does it Create in us toward them! how does it set our Hearts against them, whereby we descend into our selves, and find what a loathsome Change it has made in us, what dreadful Consequences follow its Heels; that it makes him our Enemy, who only can be our Friend, but will never be so whilst we continue in our Sins. This makes us run from it as from the Face of a Serpent, and look upon every Temptation as an Impe of the Devil, a Fiend sent from Hell to draw us thither. And whilst we go out into the World, with these Thoughts and Resolutions about us, we are still upon our Guard, and Satan and wicked Men can never harm us, I mean in our Spiritual Concerns, unless we Cowardly lay down our Arms, and fondly suffer our selves to be Juggled out of our Reason and Experience. *Though we walk in the Flesh* (saith the Apostle) *We do not war after the Flesh, for the Weapons of our Warfare are not Carnal.* 2 Cor. 10. 3, 4. Our Weapons against Sin, are by Faith to fortifie our Souls and Minds and Consciences, with a Sense and Spiritual feeling, and a Belief of God's Wrath, and his everlasting Vengeance against Sinners, to curb and restrain us from the Commission of it; nay to make us fly from every Instance of it as from eternal Ruine. And to him that firmly believes this, and has

46 *The Influence and Efficacy of PRAYER.*

it always ready in his Mind, 'tis like a Guard of Angels about him, an invincible Host to put to Flight and Conquer all manner of Opposition. For 'tis next to impossible for a Man to commit Sin, and consent willingly unto it, whilst he beholds Hell's Mouth open before him, Belching out Sulphureous Flames, and God Almighty sitting upon the Circle of a Cloud, with a fiery Thunderbolt in his hand, ready to Strike him headlong into it if he do so. And he that Confesseth his Sins aright, and is rightly sensible of them, sees this and more, even more than can be Uttered. And we know the first Step towards a Pardon, is a Sorrow for our Sins, and a Forsaking of them. *God has promised to Heal the broken Hearted*, and 'tis a certain Sign he will Heal us that he has thus broken us. And we have no sooner Confessed our Sins with an hearty Sorrow, but we begin to feel God Almighty's forgiving Nature; and as if our Consciences being loaden with Sins, were something more than a *Metaphor*, we no sooner take down the Burthen, and lay them open before God, but we presently find Ease and Quiet; our Spirits begin to Revive and Chear up, and we may almost read God Almighty's Acquittance written upon our Hearts.

When we pray for any Spiritual Graces, what an Influence do we find in our Prayers, and an Efficacy in conferring them upon us? God meets us more than half way, and our Prayers scarce get to Heaven before they come back in a Blessed Return and a Gracious Answer. When we pray for a lively Faith, how is God Almighty in a manner display'd before us, in all his terrible and Glorious Attributes, as a Judge and Revenger of Evil, as a Creator and Redeemer of his Beloved Ones; and our Sacrifice is no sooner laid
upon

upon the Altar, but we feel the Flames of an heavenly Fire consuming the Gross, and Rarifying the Spiritual Substance into a Vivid and Active Sanctity; taking us off from the World, and inspiring us with an heavenly Mindedness. When we pray for Devotion in Prayer, for Sincerity of Heart, for the Love of God, the Hope of his Mercy, Fear of his Wrath, and the Awefulness of his Sacred Presence; for Zeal and Purity in his Service, for Humility of Mind and Contentedness in all States, for Chastity, Temperance, Patience, Fortitude and such like, what a Change and Alteration of Mind do we find at present? The Holy Ghost working with us, and breathing those Graces into our Hearts, even whilst we are putting up our Petitions.

When we pray to be delivered from any Temporal Dangers, how do we at present find them either Removed, or Alleviated, by considering God's Mercy and Good-will towards us, our own Worthiness in deserving those and greater; or by comparing them with those of another World, which are much more Intolerable; or by considering that God can bring Good out of Ill, and make all Things, how unlikely soever, work together for our Advantage; and the Spiritual use we may make of them. This either Clips their Wings that they cannot hasten upon us, or pulls out their Stings that they cannot hurt us.

When we pray for any Temporal Blessings, and as we ought, with a full and entire Resignation to the Will of God, and a Filial Trust in his Paternal Goodness, we are forthwith assured, that God will give us what we pray for, if he see it fit for us, or make us content without it, which is the same thing because it is all Things.

And .

And now, Who that considers these Things, can look upon Prayer as a Task, or an uneasy Duty, and not rather as a vast Benefit and Honour, indulged to, conferred upon, and Vouchsafed unto us, by the King of Heaven? For certainly Man were a very miserable Creature, were he only left to his own Wisdom and Providence, to his own Guidance and Conduct, to his own Strength and Abilities, amidst such a World of Enemies and Dangers. But since he has such a good God to fly to, in all his Needs and Distresses, he may well be reputed but a little lower than the Angels, and only comes short of Heaven in the Degree and Measure of his Beatitude.

When we meet together in the House of God, to put up our Publick Prayers to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in Behalf of the Church in general; how do we perceive our selves to be united into one Mystical Body, the Holy Spouse of Christ, having the same common Ends, and Aims, and Interests; that as we have one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, so also one Mouth, one Heart, one Voice. How should this oblige us to a general Love and Sympathy, to embrace each other with an universal and endearing Charity? Who that considers this aright would ever causelessly absent himself: But repair thither, not only constantly but with the foremost, lest he should miss his Share in the Publick Blessings that are Prayed for. The Church is but a ruder Draught and Map of Heaven, and those that have the Love they ought for the one, will Reverence and Respect the other, and let their Demeanour be in some Measure suitable to the Place and Presence they are in, and learn before hand how to carry themselves when they shall be removed from an earthly Canaan to the new *Jerusalem*.

When

When we join with those other in the Family (that lesser Church) besides those Co-incident and Common to it with the Former, it is farther Influential in more singular and Appropriate Instances. There can hardly be any Discontent and Disagreements in the Conjugal Society; no Churlishness and Tyranny on the one hand, no evil Surmisings and Eye-service on the other, between those of higher and inferiour Ranks; but all Things go fairly on, with a mutual Love and Harmony, in Sincerity and Singleness of Heart, where this Duty is duly performed; and every one does the Duty of the Day, and his Duty to the Lord. 'Tis he that makes Men to be of one Mind in an House, that blesteth our Endeavours and prospers our Handy-work, of what Nature or Quality so'ere it be. And sure he is much his own Enemy, that knows and believes this, and yet Neglects it. 'Tis a known Saying, that the Master's Eye is half the Work: But would be much more so, if he kept them under the Stricter Eye of Heaven. And this upon a Temporal Account, but is yet more considerable upon a Spiritual: That the Master is to Answer for all the Sins and Misdemeanours that have happened in the Family through his own Neglect, and Want of Godly Discipline; nay for those greater Improvements they might have made in Knowledge and Piety, if he had not been wanting to himself, and them.

And then for Private Prayer, 'tis no less Influential in our own Particulars. When we have confest our Sins to God, and begged his Mercy and his Grace to Pardon and to guide us; when we have lifted up our Hands aright unto the Lord, His Royal Presence will have Stamp'd so fair an Idea and Character on our Minds, as cannot easily

be Blotted out, but we carry his very Image along with us Engraven on our Souls, which neither World nor Devil can deface. When we have search'd our Hearts and Consciences, not only sweep'd them Clean, of all their sinful Filth and Pollutions ; but invited Christ, his Spirit and Graces, to dwell within and go along with us, no Temptations, if we heed, can chase them thence. And the Union with, and Affection for our fellow Christians we have been professing and praying for, will leave such a Warmth of Charity in our Souls, that we shall be so far from Envy or Wronging any, that every one we meet with, is almost a second self : So that hereby we are abundantly secured of our Duty to God, our Neighbours, and our Selves. Courage we say, is half the Victory, and a good Beginning is the ready Way to an happy End. And when we have thus Consecrated the Day by our Morning-Service, and begged the Guidance of God's good Spirit for the remaining Part, we go out into the World under a Guard of Angels ; and Maugre all the Devils in Hell, the Spirits of the Air can never hurt us. And that Day is most likely to be spent in the Works of a Christian and Natural Religion, in which we set out with such a Resolution. 'Tis not to be told, what abundance of Comfort and Satisfaction, one Day so spent would bring us, and happy they that lead such Lives, and indeed 'tis only such Days as these, we can properly be said to Live.

And when at Night we beg God's Pardon for the Day's Miscarriage, his Protection and Blessing of us, Lord with what Ease and Quiet, with what Comfort and Joy, do we lay us down as in our Saviour's Arms, with Blessed Spirits round about our Beds, and the Eye of Heaven, that never
Slumbers,

Early

Slumbers, watching over us! Can there be any greater Satisfaction in the World? By this Means Death it self, which to others is a Terrour, to us is welcome. I have but another word to say, and that's a Proof of all I've said: Pray do but make the Experiment, try, whether what I've said be true, and I dare be farther bold to say, You will *Continue Instant in Prayer.*

God grant we may all of us be so Constant and Zealous in the Performance of this Duty, that we may lead happy and comfortable Lives here, and bear a principal Regard and Respect to that Life of Happiness which we hope to lead hereafter, that we may so pray with, and for one another whilst we are upon Earth, that finally we may be Translated from Praying unto God here, to the Praising of him for ever in Heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour, and Glory, all Praise, and Thanksgiving for evermore. Amen.*

FINIS.

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